

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill

- Require health information labels on all alcohol products;
- Restrict TV and radio alcohol advertising to after 9pm and before 5am, to stop alcohol being marketed to young people;
- Require all alcohol ads to be pre-approved by a government body comprising an expert from the medical profession, alcohol and drug support sector, accident trauma support sector and the alcohol industry;
- Ban alcohol ads which are aimed at children or which link drinking to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success.

I support the requirement of health information labels on all alcohol products. It is unjust and out of character with modern consumer expectations for a product which can so damage a consumer's health should be offered for sale without warnings about the health hazards. These health hazards include damage to unborn babies, liver damage, headaches, sight impairment, reduced ability to think clearly, inability to drive safely, tendencies to violence, nausea, vomiting and mental impairment leading to carrying on in a way that makes the consumer a laughing stock or subject of ridicule. In very many cases the government is required to use scarce taxpayers' funds to pay for rectification of or care of problems caused by alcohol consumption, absorbing billions of dollars which should be spent otherwise for the benefit of the community. The alcohol industry should be levied by the federal government to fully cover all damage caused directly or indirectly by alcohol consumption. None of that should have to be paid for by taxpayers via government. Taxes paid by the alcohol industry are not intended for this purpose, but are similar to taxes paid by all citizens who own motor vehicles. They contribute to consolidated revenue to cover essential community expenditure. The alcohol industry should pay for all the damage it causes.

If alcohol must be advertised, I support the restriction to after 9 pm and before 5am to stop alcohol being marketed to young people. However, I believe that the act should go further and ban alcohol advertising altogether. All Australians of drinking age know that alcohol is available and where to buy it. There is no need for it to be advertised. The Executive Director of the Australian Association of National Advertisers was quoted in the Sun-Herald (Sydney) of 16th March, in relation to junk food, "There is only a weak link between television commercials for junk food and increased consumption of such products." I suggest that the same applies to alcohol. This is a good reason for banning alcohol advertising. The fall in business costs for the alcohol industry would fall and that fall would most probably make up for the profit lost through reduced sales to young people and those most influenced by advertising. Alcohol has almost no redeeming features. It is often abused and leads to illness (mentioned above), road injuries and deaths, rape, domestic violence, child abuse, street violence, crime, marriage and family break ups, loss of income to partners and children, despair and suicide and homelessness. Whilst moderate drinking can be enjoyed by many, it would be no loss for them to drink something else. In any case, lack of advertising will not deter those who enjoy drinking alcohol from buying and drinking it.

What it will do is save naive, easily led and inexperienced people from consuming more alcohol than they can hold without adverse impacts. It will not constantly be placed in front of them in the media. They will not be enticed by the slick psychologists who work out exactly how to influence the human brain to consume alcohol. It will not entice young people who like sweet, colourful, fruity drinks to become hooked on this dependent drug through innocently believing advertisements suggesting benefits from consuming which older, wiser and more experienced people know to be completely false.

If alcohol is to be advertised, I support the formation of the body suggested in the terms of reference to this inquiry, but I believe advertising of alcohol should and eventually will be banned.

If it is to be advertised, I support a ban on alcohol ads which are aimed at children or which link drinking to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success, for alcohol is more likely to ruin such success as we have seen by high profile cases in Australia and overseas.

A more pro-active stance should be taken by the federal government. It should undertake a mass advertising campaign to persuade the general public, not just young people, that they would be healthier and better off physically, socially and economically if they ceased to consume alcoholic drinks and consumed soft drinks or water instead.

Productivity would increase as many people become unproductive safer consuming alcohol. The government would save huge amounts of money in welfare payments to those suffering the consequences of alcoholism. Roads would be immeasurably safer. Rape, domestic violence, street violence and child abuse which all have long lasting impacts that absorb enormous amounts of government funding would become far less frequent. Relationships would improve and self esteem increase. Careers destroyed by alcohol could be re-built. I suggest a budget of at least \$100 million dollars a year for ever. Savings would exceed costs.

A ban on advertising is not enough to stop marketing of alcohol to young, trusting and vulnerable Australians by ruthless, profit-oriented, wealth seeking alcohol executives, companies and organisations., The government should go further and return the minimum age for consuming alcohol to the age of 21, where it is in other parts of the world and where it was in Australia before politicians send young Australians to kill and be killed in Vietnam, at which time politicians decided to lower the drinking and voting age on the basis that if it was good enough to die by ballot, then it was good enough to drink and vote. This would put alcohol within reach of young men and women of more maturity when they are less susceptible to excessive binge drinking.

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